/68 cont./

561 198 The class of the young people, yuŋku sama, has definite activities; "style," that is to say, elegance, dancing, singing; it has a special language made up from taki-taki by inversion or addition of syllables. When the language begins to be known outside the group of young people, it is abandoned and another is invented. These past years the language in vogue was akɔɔpina, of Djuka origin; it had given rise to a whole folklore of songs.

561 Two other age classes appear to be rather clearly differentiated: that of the elders /69/ - gaã sama - (older than some 50 years), whose voices are preponderant in the councils, and that of the old men - gaãndi sama - (older than 65 to 70 years).

[888] It is conceded by all that only the elders possess wisdom and knowledge, and in principle, in a discussion, the opinion of the eldest of them has the force of law.

575 Neither does one perceive among the Refugee Blacks any customary societies playing a role comparable to the men's society 571 in the Sudan for example. In a general way their social life, very individualistic in spite of appearances, knows no other organization than the one resulting from kinship ties.

• 767 Nevertheless, the organization of the men within each village with an eye to the mourning ceremonies can be regarded as a rough approximation to customary societies:

--Kisimã or coffin-makers;

--Olɔma or grave-diggers.

But these societies are narrowly specialized and their customary powers exist only as long as the duration of their effective work.

562 Men and women. Even within the lineage where men and women 571 call one another brother, sister, aunt ... the relations between men and women are marked by mistrust.

/158 cont./

156 The Boni woman, poor in emotional feelings, and jealous of her independence with respect to men, puts her pride into subsisting by her own efforts.

178 [156] The young women, even the ones with the freest habits, stay firmly attached to their village, to their plantings, and to the mode of life they received from their grandmothers. In fact, because of its structure and customs, the society of the Refugee Blacks has much less likelihood of suffering from the poisons spread by modern life than the patrilineal societies of Black Africa.

761 /159/ Death; Burial Rites

Death is for the Refugee Blacks an event of extreme gravity.

795 In order to ward off danger and permit the yɔrka of the dead person to take its place among the ancestors, the unstinting cooperation of everyone is required.

764 765 181 [621] [619] The ceremonies which have to do with death and mourning are by far the most important ones in the day-to-day life of the Refugee Blacks; for each one they represent a very heavy material load which is accepted without recriminations. It is really a veritable mobilization, which takes place within the framework of the village and not of the lineage. The apparatus set into motion is independent of the lineage, for it must function in the same way for an outsider, Djuka or Saramaka, who dies during a trip.

764 868 767 Participation in the burial rites is for all an essential religious duty. From childhood the Boni are prepared for this task and become, some of them kisimã (coffin-makers), others ɔlɔmã (grave-diggers), some others wasimã (bathers of the dead).

767 467 Kisimã and ɔlɔmã. It can be said that in each village, ɔlɔmã and kisimã constitute customary societies, provided with an organization and wielding veritable powers for the duration of their work.

/159 cont./

767 764 [466] --The kisimã command the village during the whole time the coffin is being made and can requisition anyone to help them;

--The ɔlɔmã are masters of the river while their work lasts. In particular they can requisition travelers passing through to help them, and even confiscate their provisions. This is piisi, a joke. But as Mr. W. F. Van Lier also has us observe, this custom has a deep meaning; it reminds everyone that participation in the burial of a dead person is a fundamental religious duty.

767 467 The organization of these customary societies is, at least among the Boni, very rudimentary.

In each village there is a head of the ɔlɔmã who is acquainted with the topography of the cemetery and the rites to be carried out (hedemã fu ɔlo).

In Boniville, in 1958, this was Bukuman (Papaïston);
In Loka, Tabikiť, not replaced at the beginning of 1958;
In Asisi, Antonu (Awara Bakka).

If he is absent, someone is sent to get the head of the ɔlɔmã of another village.

Likewise, in each village there is a head of the kisimã:
In Boniville, this was Fintiman (Dju);
In Asisi, it was Boofo (Awara Bakka);
In Kormotibo, it was Aténi. /160/

764 476 The people willingly lend one another assistance from one village to the other, with no need even to ask for help, and even if it is a question of burying a foreigner in the country, a Saramaka or a Djuka for example, who dies in Boni country.

767 461 [152] For the making of the coffin it is rare not to find about 15 kisimã spontaneously met together when four or five would be enough. They like this labor very much, which proceeds in an atmosphere of joyous over-excitement in the center of admiring spectators.

/160 cont./

767 According to the moral law of the Refugee Blacks, all work must be paid for. The work of the ɔlɔmã and kisimã is no exception to the rule: the dead person must pay for what is done for him; to this end, his brothers appropriate pieces of cloth from his trunk (about 30 if the dead man was rich) and since that would not suffice, the relatives and friends of the dead man come to swell these assets by giving additional pieces of cloth.

If the dead man was very poor and no longer had cloth in good condition, the people of the lineage must give enough so that at least six may be given to the kisimã and about ten to the ɔlɔmã. If there are too few pieces of cloth for each one to be able to receive a whole one, they are cut up into small pieces, but it is absolutely indispensable for each one to be paid, even if symbolically.

764 Unfolding of the burial rites. These rites are complex, and the ceremonies in which they unfold are always very confused. Even if one is acquainted with the general idea and understands the language rather well, they are very difficult to follow. For [128] clearness in this account, we shall first give a résumé, which will be followed by observations collected in particular cases.

763 The day of the death is taken up by weeping and lamentations and the sending of messengers to the neighboring villages.

/160 cont./

[764] As soon as the death is announced, the kisimɛ̃ hastily construct a platform called papay (1), while waiting for the

[824] 1. Papay = canon wood /F. canon, from L. canna reed, pipe, tube -- Tr./ (Cecropia Sp.), rapid-growing shrub similar to the African parasol-tree; it is used for the construction of the platform because of the great lightness of its stem.

building of the coffin which will be undertaken the next day.

The wasimɛ̃ bathe the dead man with warm water after transporting him to a special place in the village. A hole is dug for the run-off of this water and closed up again afterward. This place is strictly reserved for this use; people do not go there any other time (at Boniville it is behind hut No. 5).

[967] The wasimɛ̃ are two in number, two men and two women; in each lineage there are at least one man and one woman who are acquainted with this work.

The wasimɛ̃ remove from the dead man every object (metal, ɔbia, etc.) and dress him in clean clothes. Cotton is [775] put in his nostrils and a chin-strap put on, all of which will be removed at the moment when the coffin is closed (so that the yɔrka of the dead man will not be impeded in its life beyond the grave).

The body placed in the papay is carried under the mortuary shed (krɛ̨yɔsu = house /161/ of tears). A tuft of hair and the fingernails are taken, which are wrapped in a cloth and hung inside the krɛ̨yɔsu.

/161 cont./

764 The dead person's spouse, his nearest relatives, and his children come and hang their hammocks inside the krayɔsu, where they will live until broko dɛ (eighth day after the death).

[533] [535] The village people begin the tukka songs and dance, which will last part of the night, while the friends and near relatives of the dead man lament seated, head covered with a cloth.

[824] The first day after the death, as soon as it is morning, the kisimɛ arrive, and begin to make the coffin, using mahogany boards always kept on hand, thanks to the head of the village.

[613] The women of the dead man's lineage prepare a meal which is offered to the kisimɛ about 1:00 P.M. at the end of their work.

While the coffin is being made, the dead man's friends and distant relatives arrive in crowds from the neighboring villages, bringing tafia and cloth as offerings. Two kisimɛ lay these pieces of cloth one by one on the body saying, "So-and-so buries you."

[787] These pieces of cloth are divided up; about 15 are put into the coffin by the kisimɛ, part of the rest serve as pay for the kisimɛ, part as pay for the ɔlɔmɛ; another part, finally, is used for dressing the widower and his co-wives (or the widow), showing thus that during the whole mourning period they live dependent on the dead person.

Then the kisimɛ close the coffin without any other rites taking place. The late arrivers who bring more cloths knock the coffin saying, "I bury you," and put them down on the ground.

[892] The work of the kisimɛ is over; they bring the body outside the krayɔsu, in front of which has assembled the council called ɛlɔti kuutu, which constitutes the judicial apparatus of the Boni.

/162 cont./

764 767 [613] In principle the forward bearer (who is called boatman by analogy with a boat) must belong to the dead person's lineage. Apart from this restriction, the bearers can be (and are in fact) any people whatever, the only condition required being that they be extremely vigorous, because the load they carry is at the limit of their strength.

. Fraud can exist in isolated cases, but in the great majority of cases there is no doubt as to the good faith of the bearers; they give contradictory answers, go ahead and back interminably, until, exhausted, they are raised up again by others. Actually, the interpretation of these automatic movements does not differ essentially from any process of divination.

[766] The dead person is interrogated from the age of four or five years up. If it is a very young child, he is not interrogated; but the causes of his death are sought by interrogating possessed people, and if there is reason to, the kunu is appeased in the same fashion.

764 789 754 At the beginning of the interrogation the tribunal tries to make sure that the dead person was not a wisimã. After sending the bearers to the other end of the village, the president of the assemblage has two young men hidden in huts; then he has the bearers called, saying to the dead person: "I have lost So-and-so and So-and-so, find them." If the dead person was an upright man, he must have acquired a suprahuman clairvoyance permitting him to direct his bearers straight away toward the huts in question. If he was a wisimã, he will be as if blind; his bearers go wandering in vain from hut to hut.

They state that this test always succeeds.

764 789 761 [796] [784] The interrogation proceeds interminably. The causes of death are taken up. The first question is: is it a god who killed you? The answer is nearly always yes, and they proceed by elimination in order to arrive, for example, at learning that it is an Ampuku, that it is the Ampuku borne by So-and-so. By what the kunu was set in motion, how to appease it, is not the

764 /162 cont./
787 business of the tribunal. The people of the dead person's lineage
787 will have to settle that among themselves after the obsequies.
[784] The role of the tribunal is to make official the cause of death and give it the force of law.

764 Then the inheritance is taken up in the presence of the
787 near relatives of the dead man. The questions are asked suc-
428 cessively: "To whom dost thou leave thy boat...?" "To whom dost thou leave thy gun (1)...?" The coffin moves each time

1. That, unless the dead man has, before his death, in front of witnesses, formally indicated the apportionment of his belongings; in such a case, questions are asked only for the objects whose attribution had not been clearly specified.

toward one of the people present. /Figs. 22 and 23 appear here/

764 /163/ At the end of the third day after the death the
[789] burial is prepared; the dead person is asked from daybreak on whether he is ready for that; if not it can be postponed until the next day.

[767] The ?kpa.I have been working at the cemetery since the
827 beginning of the day. They are young and strong men who have to work slowly, for not a drop of sweat may fall into the grave or their akka would risk remaining prisoner in it.

About 4:00 P.M. the bearers promenade the dead person one last time in the village for a supreme adieu. The near
[534] relatives go to the wharf. The dead man is hoisted into a canoe
705 while the apinti drum calls his yaka so that it will not remain in the village.

/163 cont./

764 given any indication whatever. Besides, how would he have
787 had time to make himself understood by two men walking at top speed, crushed by their heavy load and looking straight ahead?

This upsets all the ideas I had formed about this test. The only hypothesis that remains is that the bearers have been "tipped off" by the man who went to get them (an old man of the council). But is it possible that such a crude fraud could be current practice? The Boni are far from being stupid, they are ever suspicious /164/ and they are too talkative for such deceptions not to be laid bare by their perpetrators themselves.

Under these conditions, how can it operate--this collective suggestion which explains most of the rites of the Refugee Blacks? I can't explain it to myself.

764 Manufacture of the Coffin. The kisimɛ́ are gathered
767 around a pile of boards. They are about 15 in number,
322 commanded by Boofo, head of the kisimɛ́ of Asisi, and Aténi
[412] (Asisi-Dipélu II). A pile of boards is at their feet; some work with a small hand saw, others with an adze; the fitting is done with a machete. /Fig. 21 appears here./

They take measurements with a graver. The bottom board is cut first, then the front and back ends. The outline of the back end, in the shape of a truncated diamond, results from a rather complex construction with the compass which I have not time to report.

764 The work is done noisily in an atmosphere of crude farce.
767 The whole time it lasts, the kisimɛ́ exert veritable command
[152] over the village. The coconut trees of Kormotibo are pillaged
[262] for their benefit. The village women prepare the rice for the meal which must, according to custom, be offered to them upon finishing the coffin about noon.

/164 cont./

764 I see the head of the kisimɛ̃ make ready the fitting of the
• 969 lower lateral wings. Without nailing it, he places the back end
322 on the bottom plank, giving it the proper inclination. They put

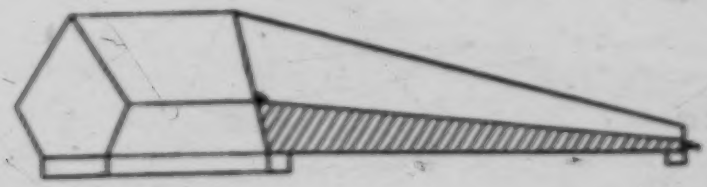

Fig. 21. A Boni coffin.

in place the board which is to serve as a wing. An elastic string smeared with soot is stretched between a_1 and a_2; they pinch it in the middle and in falling back it traces the line a_1a_2 on the wing.

(412) The cutting out of the wing is done with a saw and the fitting with the machete, then with a plane.

About 11 o'clock they begin to nail the wings. According to the rites, several kisimɛ̃ accompany in cadence the noise of the hammer blows by hitting the coffin with pieces of wood. Why this ceremony? None of the kisimɛ̃ can explain it. Perhaps it would be considered dangerous for one man to carry out alone one of the operations relating most directly to death.

764 While the kisimɛ̃ work, Way's friends and relatives do not stop /165/ arriving; their boats jam the wharf. The people wend their way toward the mortuary shed, men on one side, women on the other. It is the women who bring pieces of cloth (including those given by their brothers and husbands); the men carry tafia in bottles.

Upon arriving the women sit down, cover their faces and lament a few minutes, then sit down with the others in front of the mortuary shed. On the other side of the shed the men are seated, immobile on their small benches. An elder busies himself

764 /185 cont./
at collecting in a large demijohn the tafia brought. It will be used at the dances which will take place that very evening.

764 About 1:00 P.M. the coffin is nearly finished, the upper
• 769 wings are fitted and ready to be nailed. This is the moment when, according to custom, the meal must be served. But nothing is to be seen; the village women have talked more than worked, and their preparations are far from finished.

Time passes; discontent grows among the kisimɛ, who threaten to stop work. About 2:00 P.M. the women come in a procession led by the oldest ones to apologize for the delay; they have to pay a forfeit of a bottle of maripa oil, in consideration of which the kisimɛ agree to eat; the scene lasts at least 30 minutes, in a flood of words whose transcription in extenso would fill a book.

[782] Before the meal an offertory rite is gone through; two of the youngest among the kisimɛ slowly go around the mortuary shed carrying a dish of food; at the same time they eat, they throw food on the ground, without uttering a single word. Then they go to the river where the dish is washed.

[782] After the meal the coffin is consecrated by the sacrifice of a rooster. The leader of the kisimɛ sprinkles with its blood first the bottom at the back, then the upper side wings.

The presenting of pieces of cloth, having gone on since noon, comes to an end. Two kisimɛ stand beside the body; a woman of the lineage unfolds and hands to them the cloths given by the people present.

The kisimɛ grab the piece of cloth and unfold it. One of them says these words: "N... beli yu, umɛ (N... buries you, woman)." They do that if they recognize the cloth offered by N...; if not, they simply say: "Someone buries you, woman." Then they put the cloth on the preceding ones piled up on the body. There may be 126 camisas (1) and

764
•767
[439]

/165 cont./ There may be 126 camisas (1) and

1. Pieces of cotton goods about 1.10 x 0.75 meters. These cloths are manufactured in Holland especially for the Refugee Black clientele.

15 large pieces of cloth. About 30 camisas have been taken from the dead woman's trunk; the others have been given by the people present, the near relatives each giving several, the other relatives only one.

[783] Their work finished, the kisimɛ burn the shavings and scraps of board. They pass their tools through a flame to purify them of the stains of death. /166/

About 3:00 P.M. the coffin is brought into the mortuary shed by the kisimɛ. The kisimɛ, who have complete charge of this phase of the obsequies, count the pieces of cloth and divide them up. One part will be used for their pay, others for the pay of the gravediggers. Fifteen pieces of cloth and about [765] ten ordinary camisas will be placed in the coffin. The rest will be used for clothing the widower who, during the whole period of mourning, will thus remain symbolically dependent upon the dead person; if there are any left over, they are distributed to the members of the dead person's lineage.

[292] Placing in the Coffin. About three o'clock four of the kisimɛ take their places beside the coffin; they gird their loins with a camisa as the Refugee Blacks always do before carrying out a religious act. In the greatest silence they spread out the 15 large pieces of cloth inside the coffin, allowing them to fall to the ground at right and left. Next, two of them lift up the body while the others slip the coffin underneath (for the whole duration of the burial ceremonies, the body must remain at the exact place where it was put down. The coffin does not rest directly on the ground but is put on a mat through the

/166 cont./

764 767 medium of two round logs. This ritual seems to have as its purpose restricting the defilement of death for the village.).

The body is put back down in the deepest silence, with the greatest care, into the coffin. A pillow is put under the head.

[152] Those present show no emotion. The widower, the Saramaka Gamba, who has remained seated in his hammock since morning, turning his back to his wife's body, does not stir.

The kisimã bring the edges of the pieces of cloth back over the body and put on, in addition, a few camisas of the ordinary kind. Before the upper wings of the coffin are put in place, one of them gently removes the wads of cotton which had been put in the dead woman's nostrils.

Then the upper wings of the coffin are nailed down, always according to the same rite, blows struck in cadence with pieces of wood accompanying the hammer blows.

[692] The role of the kisimã is ended; they give over the dead woman to the council, lãnti kuutu, charged with judging her.

764 787 Search for the Causes of Death. The ceremony begins about four o'clock in the greatest confusion, as is usual among the Refugee Blacks; it is impossible to understand who is really a member of the council and who is not a member, everybody talking at once.

I think I understand that the grand man has designated Captains Kondoku (Asisi-Awara Bakka) and Tafanié (Papaïston) to preside over the ceremony. In fact, it is neither the one nor the other who begins the interrogation, but a man from Papaïston village, Agodéba, a venerable old man whose torso is molded in a deplorably shoddy jersey calling to mind a rugby match.

/170 cont./

428 613 It is very clear in Kotoïda's case that the inheriting is within the matrilineage in the strict sense, bɛɛ. Only the members of the Afi lineage to which she belonged can profit by it.

764 Burial. About 2:00 P.M. the women of the lineage who had been preparing the food for the ɔlɔmɛ since morning leave by canoe in the direction of the cemetery.

At three o'clock the last preparations begin. The occupants of the mortuary shed, completely veiled and supported by their near relatives, go to take up positions at the wharf for the last farewells (for they will not go to the cemetery).

The coffin is carried through the village one last time. This is the farewell of the dead woman to her family. The objects used in mourning are carefully collected, the earth of the shed floor raked up wherever the sanies of the cadaver might have fallen, and the whole put on the papay which is placed on the mortuary bark.

[775] At three o'clock an apinti drum is placed on the wharf to call the dead person (it is obviously a question of preventing the yɔrka from remaining in the village). The dead person turns up at the wharf. The coffin passes over a freshly cut banana-tree trunk placed at the limit of the village and of the beach. This is the symbolic passing of the dead person out of the world of the living. It is put on the canoe while the lamentations of the near relatives resound. The scene is not lacking in grandeur.

[783] The canoe draws slowly away, the drummer in the bow, while the spectators go down in a long procession to wash themselves free of the defilement of death.

[767] At four o'clock they arrive at the cemetery. The bearers of the dead person who have taken places in the canoe pass their burden to the ɔlɔmɛ who have come to the edge of the river. This to mark the fact that /171/ the ɔlɔmɛ are in authority at the cemetery. The bearers will only be present at the ceremony.

/171 cont./

764 Work is then resumed. Those present who are not ɔlɔmɛ̃, including me, are invited to throw several shovels of earth. On top of the mound are placed the papay and the objects used in the mourning, topped by the dead woman's bench. Then those present go away without haste and wash at the wharf. Several shots are again fired while the canoes go away.

The graves are spaced about 10 meters apart. The dead are not grouped by lineages; the cemetery is extended as needed, and the dead person is put in the first available spot. Thus Kotoïda (Awara Bakka) is placed beside Asoïda (Lapé), a hundred-year-old woman dead a few months before.

They show me the graves of village heads I have known, Diolé († in 1951), Atikati († in 1953). The mounds are already half settled down, the brush on them is as much as a meter high.

[969] One of my boatmen pours a little tafia on his mother's grave which is at the edge /172/ of the path. None of those present leaves the group to go to the grave of his relatives.

Thanking Ceremonies. On the twenty-third at eight [692] o'clock, the ɛ̃nti kuutu is convened and sits at the edge of the mortuary shed.

• [969] The ɔlɔmɛ̃ and in a general way those who have worked on behalf of the dead person (only about ten remain, the others have left to work) are seated opposite the men of the dead woman's lineage.

It is always Tafanié who speaks. Béna (Dju), seated before the ɔlɔmɛ̃, turned toward the speaker, plays the role of respondent. Tafanié thanks all those who have worked on behalf of the dead person, detailing at length the various jobs, then citing their various lineages; he repeats the same thing in several ways and his speech is interminable. Sometimes he [293] interrupts himself to put in a good joke or drink a bumper of [415] tafia. A 15-liter demijohn is seen circulating inside the shed.

/172 cont./

764 787 Several times the paddle is seen to answer affirmatively, then negatively. Not one of those present can understand what is said, but not one shows impatience or doubt.

[613] Suddenly Tafanié orders his assistants to cut rods: the dead woman has asked that the people of her own lineage be beaten, guilty of having neglected the yɔrka's warnings. On seeing these preparations the people of Kotoïda's lineage /173/ run away in confusion in every direction while their adversaries pursue them with the appearance of having a very good time. Some take refuge in the water, others in the bush; none whatever can be caught.

Completely symbolic punishment, moreover, for at the end of ten minutes they are seen to reappear and take their places again among those present.

764 The obsequies are ended. Only the deceased's near relatives stay seated in their hammocks under the mortuary shed. They will remain there until the broko dɛ.

764 • 769 Payments of the ɔlɔmɛ. The ɔlɔmɛ divide up one lot of cloth, keeping track of what they have received in the preceding obsequies. That does not appear to cause any discussion. If, after this, someone who has not furnished any work wants to take one of these pieces of cloth, he may do so by offering tafia to the people present.

766 787 775 Funeral ceremonies for people who die while traveling. If a man dies in the course of a distant trip, they take from the cadaver before burying it his hair and fingernails, which are brought back to his native village; in fact, it is assumed that as long as a fragment of the body is not buried, the yɔrka remains attached to it; hair and fingernails will therefore permit the interrogation of the yɔrka and will be buried in the cemetery with the usual rites.

/174 cont./

764 Cemeteries. There are two cemeteries in Boni country: one on the lands of the Dikan lineage for the people living on the French bank, the other downstream from Kotika for the inhabitants of that village. They are ordinary places which nothing indicates from the bank, for they are covered like the rest of the country by secondary forest. The dead are buried there in graves aligned parallel to the river, about seven meters apart. The dead are placed with heads turned toward the river. No separation by lineage exists within the cemetery.

The graves are not marked by any decoration, and at the end of about ten years, the mound having settled down, no trace of the burial remains.

[767] The graves are never cleaned. Only the ʔɔɔmã heads, who have received special instruction, know the graves of the principal chiefs and the boundaries of the cemetery.

769 [954] [775] The Boni never go to the cemetery alone and do not make offerings on the graves of their near relatives. Someone who would frequent the cemetery alone would be suspected of being a wisimã seeking to capture the yɔrka of a dead person.

764 487 Even if they are right near the villages, cemeteries are never connected directly to them by paths, and the dead are transported by boat. By proceeding thus they hope to isolate the villages from evil influences.

766 [761] [784] [184] If someone dies by drowning, he is buried away from the cemetery. According to Mr. W. F. van Lier, among the Djuka all drowned persons are supposed to have been victims of a kunu; the Boni do not have this conception and declare that they have lost the meaning of this custom; one notices, however, that they observe mourning for the drowned according to the usual rites.